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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2018

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SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN - ETHNIC VIOLENCE FORCES CLOSURE OF
UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES IN QUETTA

Classified By: Classified by Consul General Kay Anske for reasons 1.4 b
and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: As a result of August 6 violence between Baloch and Pashtun student groups at three educational institutions in Quetta, the Balochistan Provincial Minister of Education ordered the closure of one university for five days and all colleges in the city until August 10. This was the first major dispute between the two ethnic groups since ¶2000. Leaders of both ethnic student groups told Post that GOP intelligence agencies incited the recent violence as a means of diverting public support for a growing Baloch nationalist movement. End summary.

¶2. (C) Balochistan Minister of Education Shafiq Ahmed told Post on August 7 that he had ordered Balochistan University to close for five days and all colleges (roughly equivalent to junior colleges) in the city to close for three days, effective August 7. He took this action after clashes between members of the Baloch Students Organization-Azad (BSOA) and the Pakhtoonkhwa Students Organization (PSO) left 22 students injured, five seriously. Baloch and Pashtun student organizations have had an often violent rivalry in the past, but this was the first such major incident since ¶2000. Shafiq predicted more violence in the future due to escalated tensions between the ethnic groups.

¶3. (C) The incident started on August 6 with a dispute between BSOA and PSO members over dormitory room allocation at Balochistan University in Quetta. Fighting quickly spread to include BSOA and PSO units at Government Degree College and Bolan Medical College, both also located in the provincial capital. The violence began in early afternoon and lasted for about two hours. Police, who were stationed at the campuses of all of the involved educational institutions, did not intervene, according to some student leaders.

¶4. (C) Habib Jalib, Secretary General of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-Mengal), told Post that he held the GOP responsible for creating tensions between the two ethnic groups. PSO President Ahmed Jan went further and accused the GOP of active involvement in the melee. He claimed that outside groups joined in the attacks on Pashtun students with the support of government "agencies," such as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

¶5. (C) BSOA President Sana Baloch declared that his organization was fighting to avenge a PSO attack on two of

its members in July and denied that his group was responsible for any injuries in the current spate of violence. He claimed that three BSOA students had later been arrested by police as a result of a complaint filed by PSO members.

16. (C) Comment: Both BSOA and PSO leaders told Post that they believed the GOP was attempting to divert unified public support for the nationalist movement by exacerbating ethnic tensions between Pashtuns and Baloch. An ongoing ethnic conflict would also give the GOP ample reason to increase its military presence in the province, further hampering nationalist activities.

Anske